

Nato film: what the General said

By Denis Herbstern

WHAT the general said in the TV film that embarrassed Nato chiefs is now known to The Sunday Times.

General Sir Walter Walker, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Northern Europe, made the comments in a Tyne Tees Television film which has been virtually banned by General Andrew Goodpaster, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe.

In the film, General Walker, speaking from Oslo, says: "I think that people are ignorant about NATO and what NATO has achieved. They are complacent about the situation on the other side of the Iron Curtain."

"The greatest danger is that peace is being nibbled to death in conditions of nuclear stalemate. And there is a great temptation to the Soviets towards aggression if we are complacent, if we drop our guard."

"We have got to do something about it. We have got to close this gap between what I, as a soldier, know to be the position on the ground and what the man in the street is told by the politicians and through the medium of his television screen."

The General talks of the "information battle" to keep the British people informed—the responsibility, he says, of both NATO and the politicians. "It is also up to people like myself to persuade the politicians to do more."

He warns: "Knowing what the Russians' ultimate aim is, if we drop our guard and become complacent and bury our heads in the sand and say it can't happen to us, then we are in for a shock. 'I'm all right Jack' is no recipe for survival."

"The way to prevent war is to show that you are militarily prepared and there is political determination and will behind that preparation."

John Hobbs and Malcolm Campbell, the Tyne Tees Television men who made the film, said yesterday, that in late October, General Walker had written to General Goodpaster telling him that the film was being made.

The disclosure in The Sunday Times last week that General Goodpaster had ordered what amounted to a 90 per cent. revision of the film, has angered

the Newcastle-based TV company have postponed plans to burn the film.

Lord Aylestone, chairman of the Independent Television Authority, has made it clear, however, that the film will not be transmitted if "in the considered judgment of the NATO authorities, it was a risk to the security of members of the Alliance."

Mr Nigel Ryan, editor-in-chief of Independent Television hopes that the film will get a nation-wide showing on News at Ten.

Whether or not it is ever screened, the National Film Archive will get a copy, which will be locked in its vaults for up to 30 years if necessary.

Mr Geoffrey Rippon, Shadow Minister of Defence, has written to General Goodpaster in Brussels asking for an explanation of the ban and requesting a viewing of the film. He has received a letter from Mr Denis Healey, the Defence Secretary, disclaiming any responsibility for the ban.

Malcolm Campbell told me: "Right from the word go, we realised that security would be a stumbling block. So all along the line, we kept a rigid check."

"General Walker and his advisers actually looked through the viewfinders of our cameras. Every move was vetted beforehand and information boards and maps in the General's underground headquarters in Norway were shrouded in sheets so that we would not see them."

"At one point, security became so tight that they ever brought in a CIA man called Henry. In one of the rooms there were three cardboard notices marked 'Confidential', 'Secret' and 'Top Secret.' When we tried to take pictures of them, he objected. We had to go to General Walker to overrule him."

Hobbs and Campbell are incensed at the way they have been treated over the film. But they do not blame General Walker for asking for it to be revised. They attribute the mounting security objections to the film—after it had been cleared and praised by the lower echelons of security and information men—to General Goodpaster and to Mr Manlio Brosio, Secretary-General of NATO.

They also feel Mr Healey's influence in getting the film banned was not negligible.

Now, in the words of John Hobbs, General Walker is being made to "tramp on his own landmine" in order to make life quieter for NATO.